

Public Health Training Institute and Integrative Planning

Brown University Program in Public Health and Rhode Island Department of Health

December 1, 2005 – August 31, 2007

I. Brown/DoH Public Health Training Program (PHTP)

Context and Need

Brown University has worked closely with the Department of Health in developing the MPH program, and continues to provide advice, teaching, and expertise in addition to offering students opportunities to participate in research and practice at the Department. Department of Community Health faculty who work at the Department of Health are integral and valued participants in the academic life of the Department of Community Health and the Program in Public health. As the MPH program has evolved, one mutual goal yet to be met is the provision of educational opportunities for professional staff of the Department of Health and other community-based public health organizations.

Opportunities are limited for several reasons. Most MPH courses are offered during regular working hours, making it difficult for staff to balance work demands with educational activities. Additionally most courses are offered over the entire semester, a difficult commitment for busy staff with varying responsibilities over the course of the year.

No other program in the state offers graduate training in Public Health, and the Department of Health and Brown view this as a timely opportunity to plan for a set of “executive training” experiences within a Brown/DoH Public Health Training Institute.

Proposal

Support is sought to plan and launch a Public Health Executive Training Institute, as a collaboration between Brown University and the RI Department of Health. This institute would offer a variety of “executive training” experiences over the course of each year. Examples would include a one or two week summer intensive course, short courses conducted in evenings or over several weekends, and day-long intensive training sessions.

Participants in these educational activities would receive a certificate of participation, and, in some circumstances the courses could be used in fulfilling MPH program requirements for matriculated students. It is anticipated that participants would be drawn from the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Department of Human Services, and other state agencies, as well as community-based organizations addressing population health issues. It is likely that participants

would also be drawn from other New England States. Current MPH students would also be allowed to participate.

Target audiences will be drawn from several levels of experience and expertise, with course content tailored for each group. The chart below suggests potential educational content across the various educational experiences.

Potential Content for Courses

Current Policy Issues and Updates

Health Law and Regulation

Political Communications

Health Economics

Health Communications

Social Marketing, Special Populations

Expert Updates:

Obesity/Exercise, Lyme Disease, Lead Poisoning Initiatives, Environmental

Health/exposures, Bioterrorism Preparedness, Emerging Pathogens

Data:

Available Data Sets, Ownership, ethical issues, Privacy and HIPAA, Merging data sets,

Analytic Strategies,

Survey Research Design

Biostatistics

Training Institute Organizational Structure:

Project Directors:

Terrie Fox Wetle, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Medicine for Public Health

David Gifford, M.D., MPH, Director, Rhode Island Department of Health

Steering Committee

Patrick Vivier, MD, Ph.D., MPH Program Director

Vince Mor, Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Community Health

Robert Marshall, Ph.D. Department of Health

Linda Laliberte, J.D., Assistant Dean for Public Health

II. Integrating Public Health Policy, Practice, Research and Education

Context and Need

Although the Department of Health (HEALTH) and Brown University have worked together on the development of the MPH program, research and policy issues, there still remain unfulfilled opportunities. These include full use of existing HEALTH data for analysis and application to public health concerns, improved health communications, and efficient coordination of educational and research activities.

Goals

Three integrated initiatives are proposed:

- **Applied Research Goal:** More aggressive applied research by students, faculty and community, using HEALTH data to inform policy and practice.

Issues:

- Public health practice springs from scientific disciplines based on systematic gathering of information. HEALTH is charged with the collection and analysis of a wide range of databases, but full use and application of these data have not been achieved.
- One of the key challenges of public health is to fully use and analyze data sources in practice—to inform policy and to promote health. While HEALTH already produces numerous professional reports, professional papers and analytical briefs; substantially more work could be accomplished using the data from the numerous public health databases maintained by HEALTH.

Proposal: to establish a clear and effective linkage point for data access and analysis.

- This linkage seeks to connect the teaching and application of quantitative analytical methods to public health data for the purpose of informing practice and policy. It implements “Doing public health better” by using quantitative analysis to look at what we do now, recommending how we can improve it and then implementing change and evaluating our success. In an era of increasing needs and limited resources, improving our performance, by bridging scientific analysis with support of public health practice may be one key way that we can meet the public’s expectations.
- **Public Health Communications Goal:** Use communication science and public health communication practice to make public health interventions more effective.

Issues:

- Health communications with the public should be more effective.
- Special challenges arise in communication with special populations and those with lower levels of health literacy.

Proposal:

To provide courses, practical experiences and other educational opportunities focused on health communications. Educational content would be targeted for MPH students, research faculty and community agency personnel. Activities would include training in public health communication science, promoting communications research and adopting best practices helps to prepare public health officials and researchers for this key role.

- **Coordination Goal:** to develop a structured process and strategic planning strategy to improve coordination of educational experiences, research, use of HEALTH data and other activities between HEALTH and Brown University.

Issue

- Lack of HEALTH staff dedicated for this function
- Lack of resources to staff the activity

Proposal:

Identify key HEALTH staff person or persons to work with Brown in implementing a strategic planning process and subsequent structure to facilitate coordination.

Organizational Structure:**Project Directors:**

Terrie Fox Wetle, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Medicine for Public Health
David Gifford, M.D., MPH, Director, RI Department of Health

Steering Committee

Patrick Vivier, MD, Ph.D., MPH Program Director
Vince Mor, Ph.D., Chairman, Department of Community Health
Robert Marshall, PhD., Assistant Director, Public Health Research, Training and Practice, RI Department of Health

Advisory Committee:

External Advisors: Barbara DeBuono MD, Lisa Smolski, Merrill Thomas, Chris Koller, Jane Hayward

Public Health Policy Group

Group currently consisting of 20 Community Health Faculty, Clinical Faculty and representatives of other academic institutions, community organizations.

Resource request for Entire Scope of Work:

\$180,000 is requested for an unrestricted education and planning grant to facilitate the planning process, to support development of new courses, to design promotional materials, and to launch and evaluate the initial program for the Public Health Executive Training Institute. Resources will also be used to enhance coordination between the Department of Health and Brown Program in Public Health, including development of health communications, identification of educational needs and resources, and improved use of public health data to improve services and population health.

Requested by:

Program in Public Health
Brown University
Federal ID Tax #

05-0258809

Mail correspondence to:

Terrie Wetle, Ph.D.
Program in Public Health
Brown University, G – S2
169 Angell Street
Providence, RI 02912